



Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

**Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Beaver Lake Eurasian Watermilfoil Management**

July 16, 2012

Description of the Proposed Action:

An interagency working group, including three state agencies - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), and the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA), proposes to manage and, if possible, eradicate a noxious aquatic weed, Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM), in Beaver Lake, near Whitefish, Montana. Removal efforts may include use of barrier mats, mechanical removal, herbicide treatments, or a combination of these. The proposed action adheres to the state agency response protocol established in Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011. The purpose of the protocol is to coordinate an effective interagency response and, where feasible, contain and eradicate invasive aquatic plants.

Public Comment:

Notice was published in the legal notices in the Daily Inter Lake, Whitefish Pilot, and Flathead Beacon, and on the FWP website. An environmental assessment (EA) was published on the FWP website. FWP issued a news release regarding the draft EA and opportunity for public comment, and the draft EA was available at state and local libraries. Copies of the draft EA were sent to adjacent landowners.

During the public comment period, FWP received three written comment letters. The comments were from private individuals. All comments supported the proposed project.

FWP Response to Comments:

Comment 1: We need to act quickly using all necessary means to eliminate Eurasian milfoil to prevent the weed from spreading to other waters.

Response 1: The proposed action uses barrier mats, mechanical removal techniques, herbicide treatments, or a combination of these to eradicate EWM in Beaver Lake. Control actions would occur during the plant growing season in the summer of 2012 and may be repeated in following years as needed. Eradication of EWM in Beaver Lake would reduce the opportunity of the weed moving to other water bodies.

Comment 2: The milfoil weevil can control Eurasian watermilfoil, but does not work everywhere. It is native to North America, specific to milfoil, and prefers Eurasian watermilfoil to native milfoil. The way to use weevils would be to make sure that the weevils are present in vulnerable lakes so that if EWM shows up, the weevils are ready for it. This control action is expensive, but so are other strategies.

Response 2: The proposed action does not include the introduction of milfoil weevils. The goal of the proposed project is to act quickly and attempt to eradicate EWM from Beaver Lake. Introducing or supplementing milfoil weevil abundance is a form of biological control, which is an effort to control or suppress the EWM infestation, but not likely to result in eradication. Using weevils as a biological control is not immediate and may require many years to have a major impact.

At this time, research is inconclusive as to the value of supplementing the native weevil population. There are ongoing studies in the Pacific Northwest with this native milfoil weevil (*Eurychiopsis lenontei*) to determine its feasibility as a management tool. Results from these studies may allow for future opportunities in EWM management in Montana. The feasibility and costs of this method would be evaluated at a future time if proposed.

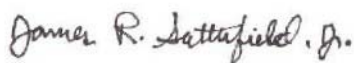
This response refers to information provided in Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011 and Cuda, James. 2009. Chapter 8: introduction to biological control of aquatic weeds, pp. 47-54. In: Biology and Control of Aquatic Plants: a best management practices handbook (Gettys LA, WT Haller and M Bellaud, eds.). Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation, Marietta GA. 210 pages.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):

I have evaluated the EA public comments and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The checklist EA did not identify any significant direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts, and the minor impacts identified can largely be mitigated. The proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Decision:

The proposed action conforms to Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011. The proposed action provides opportunity to use barrier mats, mechanical removal, herbicide treatments, or a combination of these to eradicate Eurasian watermilfoil from Beaver Lake. Based on information derived from the interagency working group, environmental review, and public comment, it is my decision that FWP approves the proposed management actions to address the infestation of Eurasian watermilfoil in Beaver Lake.



James R. Satterfield Jr., Ph.D.
Regional Supervisor

July 16, 2012
Date